

## CLAIMS

- 1 A surgical needle holder comprising an electrically-insulated housing, an  
insulated electrically-conducting support body within the housing for  
5 mounting a surgical needle, and an actuating mechanism for the support  
body including an operating knob on the housing moveable by an operator  
from a first position to cause the mechanism to move the support body and  
withdraw the surgical needle within the housing, and a second position to  
move the needle to an operating position external to the housing, and  
10 means biasing the actuating mechanism to said first position so that when  
the operator releases the operating knob the needle is automatically  
withdrawn within the housing of the needle holder.
- 2 A surgical needle holder as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the actuating  
15 mechanism is in the form of a moveable plunger carrying the surgical needle  
and mounted within the holder, and spring means acting to bias the plunger  
when under tension as the plunger is moved to the forward position thereby  
constraining the plunger to return the needle to the withdrawn position  
when the tensioning force is removed upon release of the operating knob.
- 20 3 A surgical needle holder as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the plunger has an  
actuating arm extending through a slot in the housing to engage the  
operating knob, said slot having a longitudinal-extent delimiting the forward  
and reverse movements of the plunger.

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- 4      A surgical needle as claimed in Claim 3 wherein the spring means is in the  
form of a coiled spring around an electrically-conducting shaft attached to  
the plunger, the coiled spring being held between two abutments one of  
which is fixed on the shaft, the other stationary, such that the coiled spring  
5      is compressed upon movement of the plunger to the forward position  
between the fixed abutments so providing the constraining force tending to  
return the plunger to its withdrawn position.
- 5      A surgical needle holder as claimed in Claim 4 wherein the electrically-  
conducting shaft is slidable within a hollow tube, the hollow tube being  
10      sleeved with an electrically-conductive material connected to an electrical  
connector within the tail end of the housing.
- 6      A surgical needle holder as claimed in Claim 5 wherein the plunger is  
15      provided with an axially-extending ejector pin bearing on the shank of the  
needle holder and a spring held under tension between the ejector pin and  
the electrically-conducting shaft such that when the surgical needle is  
released the ejector pin propels the needle from the holder ready for  
installation of a new surgical needle.